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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0203  
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000382

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KEDEM](#) [PREF](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: THE CENSUS SHOULD NOT GO FORWARD IN DARFUR, OPPOSITION  
PARTY REPS CLAIM

REF: KHARTOUM 372

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Both the Umma Party and SPLM believe that now is not the time to conduct a census in Darfur. Their concerns echo those of civil society in North Darfur - that peace, stability and the return of IDPs to their homes must take place before an accurate and thorough census can go forward in the region. Umma Party does not have a strategy to gain favor among the the Darfuri electorate in the 2009 elections and the SPLM, aside from having grave misunderstandings about how the census affects the elections, believes it has a broad base of support among the Dafuri people. END SUMMARY.

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DARFUR TOO UNSTABLE FOR THE CENSUS  
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¶2. (SBU) On 10 March, poloff met with Rabeei Baharadein Ali Dinar, Deputy Chairman of Umma Party in North Darfur, and Khaleel Mohammed Bakheet Tukras, Information Secretary and Spokesman for Umma Party in North Darfur, in El Fasher to speak about the party's stance on next month's census and electoral strategy for Darfur. Dinar started out by saying that the Umma Party (nationally) is not opposed to the census or the elections and that they hoped both would be free and fair. As Umma Party members and also as Darfuris, though, they registered concerns about the conduct of both the census and the elections in Darfur. They stated that the census and elections should be postponed until there is peace on the ground in Darfur. [Note: Rabeei Bahradein Ali Dinar is the grandson of the late Darfur sultan Ali Dinar. End note.]

¶3. (SBU) In a separate meeting on 10 March, poloffs met with the SPLM lead representative in North Darfur Al Shiekh Doda and his party colleague, Fakhri. The SPLM reps claimed that the census will never take place in a "proper way" in Darfur due to security concerns that enumerators will face. They agreed that the census is important in principle, but said that it is not practical to conduct the census in Darfur as scheduled for next month.

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CENSUS WILL NOT BE ACCURATE IN DARFUR  
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¶4. (SBU) Both Umma Party members stated that their number one concern about the census in Darfur is the unstable security situation. "The census requires a peaceful and secure environment," said Dinar. "Enumeration will require freedom of movement." In Darfur, the SAF, the rebels, and even civilians are armed and there will be many places that government enumerators will not have access to, he explained. In a separate meeting, SPLM Darfur reps Al Shiekh Doda and Fakhri came to the same conclusion. "It is too insecure" and impractical to hold a census in Darfur now. Al Shiekh Doda said that it would be more rational for the GoS to use 1993 census data for Darfur and adjust it to the population growth rate.

15. (SBU) Umma members went on to say that a census in Darfur will not reflect the region's true population due to the number of IDPs and refugees. "An accurate census in Darfur is not possible because people are on the move," said Dinar. Due to displacements, refugees, and areas that cannot safely be accessed by GoS enumerators, the population of Darfur is unusually low. Dinar claimed Darfur accounts for one third of the population of Sudan, and said it will be a problem if the census reveals less than this. (Note: It is highly unlikely that Darfur constitutes a third of Sudan's 40 million inhabitants, though it is notable that this figure is being cited by the political class in Darfur - perhaps based on a popular understanding passed down over generations. Due to large growth in other areas of Sudan but also due to the grinding conflict and refugee flows in Darfur, the population of Darfur may now be fifteen or twenty percent of the overall population. End note.) The party members described the critical implications the census will have on power and wealth-sharing. They instructed that there should be a solution to the Darfur problem first before the census and elections are conducted.

16. (SBU) SPLM reps claimed that IDPs will not allow government enumerators to conduct a census in the camps. They said that there is an overall lack of advocacy about the census in Darfur. Al Shiekh Doda stated that the election depends on the census and that if people do not participate in the census, they cannot vote. Poloffs corrected him and said that the census is not tied to voter registration or the elections and that if people do not participate in the census, it should not affect their ability to vote.

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GoS MANIPULATION OF THE CENSUS  
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17. (SBU) Both Umma Party members alerted poloff to a "very dangerous

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issue" not being discussed regarding the census and elections in Darfur - the supposed influx of Chadian Arabs that easily obtain Sudanese nationality. These groups can "change the dynamic of Darfur", said Dinar, especially since many true Darfuris are refugees or haQ-f wjQx~er of which opposition parties have in Darfur due to GoS harassment and the security situation. Dinar stated that the NCP will never be able to solve the problem of Darfur. "The only people who can solve the Darfur problem are Darfuris," he said.

19. (SBU) SPLM rep Al Shiekh Doda said that the NCP mentality in Darfur is different from its mentality in Khartoum. In Darfur, the NCP believes that every opposition party "should be dealt with in a rough way," he said. If opposition parties want to hold a political forum, the parties must go through a bureaucratic process that takes more than one month in order to obtain permission. If parties do not obtain local GoS clearance for their activities, they will be arrested, said Al Sheikh Doda. He also said that the NCP will financially polarize many voters in North Darfur, due to the NCP's ample financial resources and organization. Al Shiekh Doda lamented that the SPLM has major financial problems in North Darfur, saying that his office receives very little financial support from SPLM Khartoum. He added that the SPLM has offices in 10 out of 14 localities in North Darfur.

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ELECTORAL STRATEGIES NOT WELL THOUGHT-OUT  
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110. (SBU) Umma party representatives did not give a clear answer as to the party's strategy for the 2009 elections in Darfur. Dinar claimed, "We cannot do anything given the situation on the ground (in Darfur)."

111. (SBU) SPLM lead office representative for North Darfur Al Sheikh Doda doted that the SPLM has a "good strategy" to gain support in Darfur prior to the 2009 elections. He said that the SPLM does not have any problems with access to the IDP camps, which shows how much the party is liked among Darfuris. Additionally, he said that the SPLM is constantly in contact with IDP leaders and students in North

Darfur. He said the SPLM will campaign in Darfur, as it is doing across the country, under its strategy of a "New Darfur", which includes elements of peace, equality and development. Al Sheikh Doda boasted that the SPLM has been engaged in the Darfur problem by facilitating and encouraging unity among non-signatory rebel groups in Juba. He claimed that the majority of people in Darfur will vote for the SPLM in the upcoming elections and that the NCP is nervous it will lose in Darfur. The SPLM reps underscored the importance of securing peace, stability and the return of IDPs to their homes in Darfur before census and elections take place. Elusive about the prospect of delaying elections past 2009 (for the sake of stability in Darfur), Al Sheikh Doda said that the SPLM is "very keen to see elections done on time and in a proper way."

¶12. COMMENT: It is a struggle to find anyone in Darfur who thinks that conducting the census next month is a good idea. Darfuris are far more concerned with achieving peace and stability than participating in a "democratic" census and elections over the next year. Furthermore, Darfuris feel that, given their current situation of massive displacement, widespread violence, and distrust of the GoS and its activities, a census, nor elections, will benefit them.

¶13. COMMENT CONTINUED: The Darfur electorate has become de-politicized and turned its attention and loyalty to rebel movements. Although Darfur was once a political stronghold for Umma, Umma seems to have no strategy for winning its supporters back. With the field more or less wide open for the SPLM, it

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unconvincingly claims to have strong support on the ground. However the reality is that the SPLM is so focused on the South and its upcoming bid for secession, that Darfur becomes a third-rate priority. This is a serious mistake (and represents the SPLM's lack of capacity to adequately make and implement its plans) because the SPLM has much to gain from allying itself with other marginalized groups in Darfur.

FERNANDEZ